

Message Text

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ORIGIN AF-10

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY COTONOU

UNCLAS STATE 121280

E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS: PFOR

SUBJECT:PRESS GUIDANCE: U.S. ABSTENTION ON WORLD BANK
LOANS FOR BENIN

Q: I UNDERSTAND THAT THE U.S. REPRESENTATIVE ABSTAINED
ON HUMAN RIGHTS GROUNDS ON TWO WORLD BANK LOANS TO BENIN
ON MAY 26TH. WOULD YOU COMMENT?

A: THE U.S. ABSTAINED ON TWO PENDING WORLD BANK LOANS
TO BENIN BECAUSE OF OUR CONCERN REGARDING THE HUMAN
RIGHTS SITUATION THERE. WHILE WE ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE
HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN THAT COUNTRY, WE ARE MINDFUL
ALSO OF THE FACT THAT THESE TWO LOANS, 2 MILLION DOLLARS
FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE IN DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AND 5.5
MILLION DOLLARS FOR FEEDER ROADS, ARE LIKELY TO BENEFIT
DIRECTLY THE PEOPLE OF BENIN. THEREFORE, WE CHOSE
THIS METHOD TO INDICATE OUR CONCERN. IF THE SITUATION
IMPROVES, WE STAND READY TO WORK WITHIN THE INTERNATIONAL
FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS AFFIRMATIVELY TO PROMOTE PROGRAMS
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DESIGNED TO IMPROVE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS IN
BENIN.

Q: IS THIS A NEW DEPARTURE? ARE WE OBLIGED UNDER LAW
TO DO THIS?

A: OUR ABSTENTION IS BASED SOLELY UPON OUR POLICY TO

PROMOTE INTERNATIONALLY-RECOGNIZED HUMAN RIGHTS, A POLICY DEFINED BY SECRETARY VANCE ON APRIL 30TH. OUR POSITION ON THESE PENDING LOANS REFLECTS THE RESOLVE OF THIS ADMINISTRATION TO MAKE THE ADVANCEMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS A CENTRAL PART OF OUR FOREIGN POLICY.

Q: HAVE WE VOTED OR ABSTAINED FROM VOTING AGAINST ANY OTHER COUNTRIES ON HUMAN RIGHT GROUNDS?

A: IN THE INTER AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK, LAST JUNE, ON THE BASIS OF THE HARKIN AMENDMENT WHICH RELATES TO IRDB, WE VOTED AGAINST A 2L MILLION DOLLAR INDUSTRIAL CREDIT LOAN TO CHILE. ON MAY 10TH OF THIS YEAR, WE ABSTAINED ON TWO WORLD BANK LOANS FOR ETHIOPIA BECAUSE OF OUR CONCERN REGARDING THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION THERE. IN OTHER INSTANCES IN THE INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS, WE HAVE TAKEN APPROPRIATE ACTIONS TO PRESS FOR IMPROVED HUMAN RIGHTS.

Q: TO WHAT ACTIONS ARE YOU REFERRING?

A: THERE WERE SEVERAL INSTANCES IN WHICH PRIVATE REPRESENTATIONS WERE MADE, AND IN SOME INSTANCES WE HAVE SEEN SOME HOPEFUL SIGNS OF IMPROVEMENT.
VANCE

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